

Telegram

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Terror Task Force Gets First Crisis

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A special "Terror Task Force," created by the State Department two months ago after the slaying of two U.S. diplomats in Khartoum, is handling its first crisis with the kidnaping of American Consul General Terrence G. Leonhardy in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The abduction of the 58-year-old career diplomat happened to occur while the man who heads the task force, former Ambassador Armin H. Meyer, was in California. When word reached the State Department Operations Center shortly after 8 p.m. Friday, the TTF was activated by Meyer's assistant, John N. Gotch.

The Star-News learned that Secretary of State William P. Rogers ordered establishment



ARMIN H. MEYER

of the unit last March after Black September Palestinian guerrillas murdered Ambassador Cleo A. Noel and his

deputy mission chief, George C. Moore, in the capital of the Sudan.

PREVIOUS kidnapings, as well as the murder in Guatemala of Ambassador John Gordon Mein in 1968, have been handled by hastily organized teams at the Operations Center, usually manned by foreign service officers.

Meyer, whose last overseas post was ambassador to Japan, and Gotch are nominally part of the Near Eastern Affairs Division. Their operating plan when a U.S. diplomat is involved in a terror situation is to call on regional and security specialists and maintain contact with the affected embassies and foreign offices.

In the case of Leonhardy, the TTF was joined by state security chief Marvin Gentile, Deputy Assistant Secretary of

State of Inter-American Affairs Robert A. Hurwitch, nominated Assistant Secretary of State for the Latin American Division Jack Kubisch, Mexican desk officers Charles Torrey and Frank Alberti and others.

MEYER encountered terror himself in Tokyo in 1969 when an anarchist youth mistook him for Secretary Rogers and tried to stab him with a sharpened paint scraper in Tokyo Airport. Meyer was knocked down but not injured.

Besides Mein and Leonhardy, other American diplomats who have been victimized by political terror groups in Latin America include Ambassador C. Burke Elbrick, kidnaped but released in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1969; political officer Sean M. Holly, kidnaped but released in Guatemala City in 1970 and Ambassador Clinton Knox, kidnaped but released unharmed in Port au Prince, Haiti, in January, this year.

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